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THE FORCES BEHIND THE RUSSIAN OFFENSIVE

BY CHARLES JOHNSTON

Two events drew the eyes of the whole world toward Russia in the early days of June: the tragic death of Lord Kitchener on his way thither, at the instance, we are told, of the Russian Emperor; and the brilliant victories of General Alexei Brusiloff, heralded as the beginning of the great Russian offensive.

To England's great warrior one may adapt the words of Southey concerning an earlier hero: "If the chariot and horses of fire had been vouchsafed for his translation, he could scarcely have departed in a brighter blaze of glory." Alone in England Kitchener foresaw the length and the severity of the war; he alone had the courage to ask for enormous sacrifices; he alone could have completed the great work of preparation.

As for General Brusiloff's victory, his daily average in captures, for the first weeks of June, was 7,000 Teutons with 120 officers, 20 guns, 30 machine guns and a dozen trench mortars; he had carried the forts of Dubno and Lutsk by storm, and driven the Teutons back some twenty or thirty miles. If we contrast this with the results of the German offensive before the not dissimilar fortress of Verdun, not in seven days, but in seven weeks, we shall have a fair measure of the magnitude and brilliance of General Brusiloff's achievement. And it must not be forgotten that 120,000 in two weeks is the measure, not of the Teuton losses, but of loss in prisoners alone. Adding killed and wounded, the total must be three times as great; practically the equivalent of eight army corps. But the deeper significance lies in the material taken: guns, bomb-throwers, machine-guns, trench-mortars, searchlights, gas-generators, telephones—the whole

defensive apparatus of modern trench warfare. It means this: that General Brusiloff has discovered the secret for which the Crown Prince of Germany is vainly seeking before Verdun, the secret of smashing a way through the marvellous modern system of defense. We have been told that the Teutons, calling all available forces to the Meuse and the Adige, have left only a curtain of troops opposed to the Russians. General Brusiloff has already torn a great rent in the curtain; there is no inherent military reason why he should not rip it into shreds, reversing the really brilliant achievement of General Mackensen last April and May.

General Brusiloff was one of the few men in Russia firmly convinced that the war must come, and come soon. In 1911, he was Corps Commander at Lublin, and while there laid enormous stress on aeroplane scouting, so that it was no uncommon thing to see half-a-dozen airmen soaring above the town. Then his high attainments led to his transfer to Warsaw, as the danger center, but, after a few months' service with the high command there, he was transferred, at his own request, to Vinnitza, close to the northeastern end of Galicia. The reason for this request was that he felt convinced that war was coming, and he foresaw that, just at this point, Russia could make the quickest, most effective thrust at the Teutonic forces. The war came, and within a few days, General Brusiloff and General Ruzsky were across the frontier; and, while the equally rapid advance of General Samsonoff and General Rennenkampf, in the north, met with disaster, Ruzsky and Brusiloff gained striking successes, carrying their armies forward to the passes of the Carpathians. General Brusiloff is one of the few generals of the Allies who, for a full year, was continuously on enemy soil. He never lost a battle, and, when the dire failure of ammunition forced the retirement of the Russian armies and brought about the loss of Warsaw, it is on record that not for an hour did Brusiloff lose his serenity and faith. But he is determined now to win back every foot of land then lost—and more—and the spirit of the man is expressed in his recently reported words, as he sent the correspondents to the rear: "You will learn of the Russian advances from the Austrian bulletins."

General Brusiloff is a master of military science who has learned all that can be learned from his allies and his enemies. He has taken part, many times, in the grand

manœuvres on the plains of France, where stern battle now rages; he has stood beside the German Emperor and watched the spectacular development of immense cavalry charges. And, before the war, he practised ceaselessly the handling of the largest bodies of troops, in those great Russian manœuvres into which he put much of the rigor of war. It was noted, in these contests among the Russian fields and forests, that General Brusiloff always seemed to know what his opponent had in mind to do, and took the needed measures to turn his flank—an art he has not lost in real war.

It must not be supposed that General Brusiloff's victories are a mere stroke of luck, or that he has not the determination and the material resources to carry the matter through, or that all the resources of the nation are concentrated in his hands, great general and greatly trusted though he is. The Russian drive begins at the south, simply because, with coming Spring, that was the end to melt first, to dry first, leaving open roads—roads which, by the way, up to the frontiers of Hungary, General Brusiloff has trodden already, with a victorious army. There are competent commanders along the whole Russian line: General Evert, who holds the center, did splendidly in the withdrawal from Warsaw to the present base; and, on the northern, the Riga-Dwinsk front, our old friend, General Kuropatkin, has already done excellent work, both offensive and defensive, in the last two months. Behind these three battle-commanders, General Alexeieff holds the chief command under the Emperor, and correlates their efforts and advance.

It is clear that Russia is at last bringing her immense and unspoiled resources to bear. This is only the beginning. On August 4, 1914, Herr von Jagow, the Secretary of State, a German diplomatist who can tell the truth, said to the British Ambassador at Berlin, that the Germans had violated Belgian neutrality because they had to advance into France by the easiest way, so as to be able to get well ahead with their operations and endeavor to strike some decisive blow as early as possible. It was a matter of life and death for them, as, if they had gone by the more southern route, they could not have hoped, in view of the paucity of roads, and the strength of the fortresses, to have got through without formidable opposition entailing great loss of time. This delay would have meant time gained by the Russians for bringing up their troops to the German frontier. Rapid-

ity of action was the great German asset, while that of Russia was an inexhaustible supply of troops. The British Ambassador replied that, if it was a matter of life and death to Germany to advance through Belgium and violate Belgium's neutrality, it was a matter of life and death for the honor of Great Britain that she should keep her solemn engagement to defend Belgium's neutrality if attacked. But the point is that Herr von Jagow is astute enough to realize now, after two years, that Germany has played her "great asset," and lost; the violation of Belgium has availed her nothing, for she is still beating her life out against those same fortresses; but Russia is at last beginning to play her great asset, with a high hope and faith that she will win.

The strength of Russia's asset we may make evident thus: With a very homogeneous population rapidly approaching 200,000,000 and with the highest birthrate among white nations, Russia has from year to year produced about three times as many young men of military age as she was able to train, even with her vast armies. Something over a million and a quarter young men come to military age—twenty-one—each year. And this does not include the Cossacks of the South, who have their own hereditary military system and are trained in arms and horsemanship from boyhood. Of this million and a quarter of young Russians, only 450,000 are, in normal years, called to the colors for three years' military training. This means, of course, that, in time of peace, there are three of these yearly "classes" with the colors, a total of 1,350,000 men, still excluding the very effective Cossack cavalry. There were at the same time, as we have seen, twice that number of young men not drafted, or given only an outline training; and as in Russia the men to serve are chosen by lot, the additional two-thirds are just as fine military material, once they are trained. This covers the Russian youth of 21, 22 and 23: counting, trained and untrained, over 4,000,000. Then there are the reserves; first the men from 23 to 39, who have had their full three years of training. If we suppose that a full third of these succumb to death or are otherwise unfit, we have 4,500,000 fully trained first reserves, in no case over 39, or, adding men up to 42, a full 5,000,000. And there are 10,000,000 more, of the same age, partially trained, but equally good material; equal in physique, in morale, in patriotism and devotion. This gives

us a total of some 20,000,000; so that, if we take the extreme figure of 3,000,000 as representing Russia's losses in the first two years of the war, it is clear that she has still not less than 15,000,000 men to draw upon—men who make as fine soldiers as any in the world. Herr von Jagow was right: Russia's great asset is still to come. General Brusiloff will not fail for lack of men. And it must be remembered that, if the war continues for ten years more, Russia can, from her growing youth, put into the field a million and a quarter young men each year. Can her adversary do the same? This is one reason why Russia cannot be tempted, by arguments of vague sentimentalism which ignore the real moral issues, to make a premature and dangerous peace. Nor will any nation which seeks to induce her to do this secure thereby her friendship for the future.

Concerning material resources to support these vast armies, how does Russia stand? The whole world realizes now that the retreat of Russia's unbeaten armies, in the Spring and Summer of last year, was due to failure of ammunition. The Russian armies lacked cannon, machine-guns, rifles, ammunition. Against the greatest artillery attack the world has ever seen, they had only cold steel. This is the finest possible testimony to the dauntless courage of the Russian soldier—that, after three months, the army was intact, ready to occupy the strong line it has since held, and held with unshaken valor. Has she been able, in the year since Mackensen stormed the Dunayets and advanced through Galicia, to make up her deficiency?

During this year Russia has drawn enormous supplies from four separate sources: from her Allies, and, in particular, from England, through the White Sea; from Japan, along the line of the Siberian railroad; from the United States, both by the White Sea and by Vladivostok; and, finally, from her own arsenals and factories, as a result of the great movement called "the mobilization of the Russian people." To speak only of the fourth source, Russia has, in the valley of the Donets—which joins the Don and flows into the Sea of Azov, a "black country" abundantly supplied with iron and coal. This region produces 3,500,000 tons of steel annually; enough for cannon and shrapnel. Russia, like both England and France, miscalculated the length and rigor of the war, and, losing sight of the fact that ever new resources would be needed, sent her miners and

metal-workers to the front. After long months, this initial mistake has been repaired and more than repaired. The metallurgists and miners are back at work in the Donets region, with many Belgian workmen—who will not fail in zeal—to help them. Workmen have been brought from China and Manchuria to supplement these Europeans. The Putiloff works at Petrograd have been rebuilt and enlarged and are turning out large supplies. As early as October, 1915, at the time of the great Champagne initiative, Russia was manufacturing four times as many shells as six months earlier; since then, the rate of output has steadily increased. And this not at one point alone. “All Russia,” said Prince Lvoff, President of the Union of Zemstvos—local self-governments—“All Russia must become a military organization”; and his words have been vigorously applied. Every form of war material is being produced in huge quantities.

Yet the imports are exceedingly significant. For example, during the first four months of 1914 the port of Vladivostok imported 40,000 pounds of copper; during the same period of 1915 the amount had risen to 10,000,000 pounds.

One item also of Russia's financial resources: The exchange of the ruble stands low—because the closing of the Bosphorus has kept Russia from sending her goods to market these two years—but home resources stand high. The Bank of Russia has, we are told, nearly a billion dollars in gold reserve; and, on the other hand, the wealth in Russian savings banks increases steadily and rapidly. Before the war the deposits in these savings banks rose by some 30,000,000 to 50,000,000 rubles a year; since the war the increase has been 50,000,000 a month; the single month of October, 1915, saw 73,000,000 rubles added to the savings of the Russian people. Since the war began these savings have increased by a billion and a quarter rubles.

These are but straws in the wind, mere surface indications of the enormous resources of the largest of the white nations, which has also by far the largest continuous territory; and whose resources, therefore, to use Herr von Jagow's word, are really “inexhaustible.”

It was a commonplace of the Japanese war that Russia had splendid troops, very badly officered. The morale and physique of her troops remains excellent; indeed, owing to the nation-wide suppression of alcohol, both her physical and

moral—and, as we have seen, financial—conditions are markedly better; but it can be said now with confidence that, with the exception of France, no belligerent on either side has produced so much military talent and of so high an order. We have already spoken of General Brusiloff—who holds the extraordinary record of having captured more than 500,000 enemy troops; of General Evert; of the veteran, General Kuropatkin, whose book on the Japanese war and the defects of the Russian army without doubt contributed to the removal of many of these defects; of General Michael Alexeieff, Commander in Chief under the Emperor; and it would be unjust not to mention two very remarkable men, who, under the general supervision of Grand Duke Nicholas, are fighting Russia's battles in Asia: General Baratoff, in Persia, who is now some fifty miles from Bagdad, and General Yudenitch, the conqueror of Erzerum and Trebizond.

A word, perhaps, may be said about the Grand Duke himself, who stands out as the most brilliant military figure of the whole war. We spoke, a little while ago, of General Ruzsky, who shared the first Galician offensive with General Brusiloff. This brilliant and tenacious soldier was compelled to withdraw, because of serious illness, a short time before Mackensen's great raid. He recovered, and again returned to the front, this time on the Riga-Dwinsk line; but, unhappily, a recurrence of the malady has caused his withdrawal once again. While the details are not known, it seems certain that something of the same nature befell Grand Duke Nicholas. When convalescent he was able to take up the duties of Viceroy of the Caucasus, traditionally the most honorable post in the Russian Empire, after the Emperor, and long held by the Grand Duke Michael, the Grand Old Man of Russia's imperial house, whose prestige hardly yielded to that of the Emperor himself. In large measure restored to health, Grand Duke Nicholas has been able to conceive and supervise the remarkable Eastern campaigns, choosing General Baratoff to lead the Russian forces in Persia, and General Yudenitch to conquer Turkish Armenia. Only in this section of the war-map does war retain its old-time mobility, if we except tropical Africa, where the numbers engaged are very small; and it is one of the wonders of the Grand Duke's plan, that he has been able so perfectly to co-ordinate the movements of half-a-dozen separate forces, operating hundreds of miles apart, amid huge moun-

tains and barren wildernesses, among savage and hostile tribes; this, and the complete secrecy with which the Persian venture especially was shrouded; so that, until the capture of Sultanabad and Hamadan, we had hardly any inkling that events, which will be decisive for the future history of Western Asia, were in preparation. General Baratoff and his small force—he had hardly more than a division—were sent by way of the Caspian, which is practically a Russian lake, to Teheran; where the first need was to bring the Shah definitely to the Russian side, as against the intrigues of the German Minister, Prince Henry of Reuss, who had sought to gather a Moslem force for an attack on India. It is a part of the revenge of time that Russia, whose invasion of India was a traditional nightmare of an earlier generation of Englishmen, has, in fact, saved India from invasion. General Baratoff then worked westward, across the huge mountain-barrier which separates Persia from the Tigris and Euphrates valley, and it is probable that he will very shortly join hands with General Yudenitch, the victor at Erzerum. So that the conception and co-ordination of these brilliant Asiatic operations must be added to the already notable record of Grand Duke Nicholas.

At the head of all these men and forces stands the new War Minister, General Shuvaieff, who came to the War Ministry at Petrograd almost at the same time that General Roques took office as Minister of War in Paris.

CHARLES JOHNSTON.